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Common' cold really complex; immunization unlikely, UM microbiologist says

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MISSOULA----

The "common" cold--man's perpetually pesky enemy--probably is much more complex than most people realize and equally as difficult to fight.

That's one conclusion reached by a University of Montana microbiologist, Dr. Richard N. Ushijima, after extensive scientific study.

In an interview about the possibilities of immunizing humans against the cold, Dr. Ushijima said it would be almost impossible, and possibly very dangerous, to develop a vaccine suitable for cold immunization.

"Immunization against colds seems to be just about impossible because there are simply too many viruses which cause colds," Dr. Ushijima explained. "A vaccine for colds would have to contain at least 200 different viruses to be sufficiently useful.

"The problem of immunization becomes even more difficult," he continued, "when one realizes that not all colds are caused by viruses. Some so-called 'colds' are really symptomatic reactions to allergic responses against many things other than viruses."

Dr. Ushijima said a vaccine suitable for warding off the common cold could also prove to be harmful, particularly to infants.

"Many vaccines contain a dead type of virus which stimulates the body into producing antibodies against the specific virus," the University scientist explained.

"In some cases," Dr. Ushijima continued, "very young children still have a specific antibody of their mothers in them, and this can create serious problems--including reaction and even death-- if the infants are vaccinated against the same virus."

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"COMMON' COLD IMMUNIZATION UNLIKELY---2

Dr. Ushijima, who is an associate professor of microbiology at UM, said chemicals and drugs probably will continue to be the most valuable substances in warding off the effects of colds.

"Certain drugs can induce the body to produce proteins known as interferon," he said. "These proteins prevent many viruses from reproducing within the body in the first place."

Dr. Ushijima received his Bachelor of Science degree in 1953 and his master's degree in 1957, both in microbiology, at Montana State University, Bozeman. He was awarded his doctorate in microbiology at the University of Utah, Salt Lake City, in 1961.

Before his UM appointment in 1966, he was a virologist at Utah, and later an assistant scientist at the Oregon Primate Center, Beaverton, Ore.

Dr. Ushijima is a native of Kualapuu, Molokai, Hawaii. He and his wife, the former Enid E. Miyada, a native of Hilo, Hawaii, have three children.

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